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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: OPPOSITION TO DIALOGUE WITH KRG SLOWLY
DIMINISHING?

REF: A. BAGHDAD 67

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 106

Classified By: PolCouns Janice G. Weiner for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) Repeated and ongoing efforts to convince the GOT to engage directly with Iraqi Kurds, beginning with President Talabani and eventually include Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) officials, appear gradually to be gaining traction. GOT Deputy Iraq Coordinator Murat Ozelik (please protect) is increasingly optimistic that opposition to openly starting such a direct dialogue is beginning to wane. While initial GOT outreach to KRG officials via intelligence channels in mid-December was reportedly well received by the Iraqis, that effort was effectively negated by large-scale airstrikes against PKK targets located deep inside northern Iraq by the Turkish military on December 16. Ozelik lamented at the time that senior GOT officials seemed solely focused on the need for a military response to PKK terrorism.

[1](#)2. (S) According to Ozelik, President Gul used the last meeting of the National Security Council on December 28 to make clear the need for the GOT to begin engaging with the GOI "from top to bottom." Gul also went out of his way at the meeting to say he wanted to hear from backbench MFA officials not sitting at the main table about how they think Turkey should be moving forward in approaching the Iraqis and the KRG. Ozelik characterized the meeting as "the best he has attended or heard about" from the standpoint of the GOT's Iraq policy and an openness to fundamentally changing the character of the Turkey-Iraq relationship. Most striking from Ozelik's point of view was Chief of Defense General Buyukanit's remark that "if Turkey wants to see a unified Iraq, the country will need cement, and that cement is the United States," underscoring the need for the GOT to work closely with us on Iraq beyond the narrow scope of military/intelligence cooperation.

[1](#)3. (S) COMMENT: Ozelik has been the most active and vocal proponent in MFA for moving forward in a constructive manner

to forge a new relationship between Turkey and Iraq, as well as with Iraqi Kurds. He recognizes his conviction in this regard has not been broadly shared by other policy actors, though he has always viewed President Gul as the figure most likely to push the envelope. Ozcelik's newly-found optimism is an indication that he believes others are gradually catching on. His positive assessment of how Gul is starting to drive the NSC train, long moribund under former President Sezer who lacked the requisite political skills, is also encouraging.

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